



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT of HEALTH

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **January Is National Cervical Health Awareness Month**

BISMARCK, N.D. – January is National Cervical Health Awareness Month. Although cervical cancer is highly treatable, about 4,000 women die from cervical cancer in the United States every year, according to the North Dakota Department of Health. Many cervical cancers develop because women do not have regular Pap tests.

*Women's Way* may provide a way to pay for breast and cervical cancer screenings. The program helps women who have limited incomes and do not have insurance that covers breast and cervical exams. Women who enroll in *Women's Way* usually receive the screening services from the doctor or clinic they select.

The breast and cervical screening tests, available to eligible women ages 40 through 64, include clinical breast exams, Pap tests and pelvic exams. Women ages 50 to 64 also receive mammograms.

For a woman to take part in *Women's Way*, her family can earn up to \$3,442 per month for a family of four. A woman with a household of two can earn up to \$2,282 per month. About 24,000 North Dakota women may be eligible for *Women's Way*. To find out if they are eligible, women can call 1-800-44 WOMEN. The toll-free call will ring to local public health office in their area.

*Women's Way* has screened 8,949 women since 1997. Through those screenings, 152 breast cancers and 806 cervical cancers and pre-cancers have been detected. *Women's Way* is funded by the federal government and managed by the North Dakota Department of Health.

For more information about Cervical Health Awareness Month, call the National Cervical Cancer Coalition at 800.685.5531 or visit [www.nccc-online.org](http://www.nccc-online.org).

*Please note: An article about a Women's Way client follows.*

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## When Was Your Last Pap Test?

GRAND FORKS, N.D. – Judy Ringler, Grand Forks, N.D., was surprised at her mother’s cervical cancer stage-four diagnosis. Although Judy knew her mother had never had cervical cancer screenings, her mother didn’t seem to be ill. For Judy, the diagnosis was a wake-up call, yet she didn’t schedule her regular Pap test because she couldn’t afford it. “It had been 15 years – easy – since I had had a Pap test. Even with mom having cervical cancer, it was kind of like, what I didn’t know wouldn’t hurt me and then to top it off, I just couldn’t afford it,” Judy said.

In 2000, Judy learned about *Women’s Way*, North Dakota’s breast and cervical cancer early detection program. She picked up a *Women’s Way* brochure, read through it, and set it aside. She thought it would be too much of a hassle to enroll. When signs of menopause began, Judy finally made the call. “I was surprised at how easy it was to enroll, and the gals at *Women’s Way* were just so concerned that I hadn’t had a Pap test in so long. When I did enroll in *Women’s Way* and I did get my Pap test, I felt really good about myself. It showed that I cared about myself,” Judy said.

Judy’s test results came back negative for cervical cancer, which left Judy elated. “I saw what cervical cancer does. It is devastating. I don’t want to die from cervical cancer and now, with *Women’s Way*, I can get my regular Pap tests and have that peace of mind,” Judy said. She now encourages women to use *Women’s Way* services through her job at a local church. She says all women should get checked as a boost to self-esteem.

January is National Cervical Health Month. *Women’s Way* encourages all women to get regular screenings. *Women’s Way* may provide a way to pay for mammograms and Pap tests. North Dakota women ages 40 through 64 may be eligible for clinical breast exams, Pap tests and pelvic exams. North Dakota women ages 50 through 64 also may be eligible for mammograms. It is estimated that 24,000 North Dakota women may be eligible for *Women’s Way*. For a woman to take part in *Women’s Way*, her family can earn up to \$3,442 per month for a family of four. A woman with a household of two can earn up to \$2,292 per month. *Women’s Way* has screened 8,949 women since 1997. Through these screenings, 152 breast cancers and 806 cervical cancers and pre-cancers have been detected.

Today, Judy enjoys reading and looks forward to growing old with her “main squeeze.” She is thankful to be cancer-free and proud that she makes time to get regular Pap tests. “Having cervical cancer screenings and a mammogram ... having made the decision to do that on a routine basis makes me feel really good about myself,” Judy said.

For more information about *Women’s Way*, call 1-800-44 WOMEN or visit the *Women’s Way* website at [www.ndhealth.gov/womensway](http://www.ndhealth.gov/womensway).

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*Please note: This news release and a photo of Judy Ringler are available for download at [www.ndhealth.gov/womensway](http://www.ndhealth.gov/womensway).*

*To access archived news releases and other information, visit the North Dakota Department of Health Press Room at [www.nddohpressroom.gov](http://www.nddohpressroom.gov).*